REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

By this Amendment, claim 17 is amended and claims 18-21 are canceled. Claims 17, 22-24 and 27-33 are pending.

Favorable reconsideration is respectfully requested in view of the foregoing amendments and the following remarks.

Claims 17-20, 22-24 and 29-33 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly being obvious over U.S. Patent No. 4,299,920 to Peters in view of U.S. Patent No. 4,441,793 to Elkins. Claim 21 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly being obvious over Peters in view of Elkins and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,645,434 to Muramatsu. Claims 27 and 28 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly being obvious over Peters in view of Elkins and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,037,168 to Brown. These rejections are respectfully traversed.

Claim 17 has been amended to incorporate the limitations of claim 21. With the present limitation of using a glass plate with a thickness of about 150 μm as a base of the reaction substrate, the claimed invention cannot be obvious in view of the Peters and Elkins references as they do not disclose the use of a base glass plate with this thickness.

Furthermore, the claimed invention cannot be obvious in view of the further combination with the Muramatsu reference as Muramatsu discloses a sample observation plate including a crystalline thin film and a glass plate, which are bonded to each other (see, e.g., Abstract). The sandwich structure disclosed by Muramatsu et al. represents an integral component, which can be used for microscopy applications. Generally, sample observation plates having a low

thickness having this layer structure or having other structures are known in prior art. However, the application of the glass plate having such a low thickness in a reaction substrate of the invention cannot be obvious as the glass plate represents an extremely sensitive component.

A skilled person having experience with microscopy cover glasses or similar thin plates knows that these plates are very sensitive to mechanical tension or bending. Therefore, the skilled person would not have been motivated with a reasonable expectation of success to use a microscopy cover glass in the reaction substrate of the invention, which is characterized by a flexible compartment layer made of silicon rubber. When using the reaction substrate of the invention, the glass plate can be subjected to bending when the glass plate is adhered to and/or separated from the flexible compartment layer. The inventors have found that a glass plate having a thickness of about 150 μm is stable enough to be suitable for use in these steps in using the reaction substrate.

On the other hand, the provision of a glass plate with low thickness according to claim 17 in the reaction substrate results in an essential advantage in terms of monitoring samples in the reaction substrate with e.g., confocal microscopy. This advantage has not been obtained with any of the conventional reaction substrates.

Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the obviousness rejections are respectfully requested.

For at least the reasons set forth above, it is respectfully submitted that the above-identified application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and prompt allowance of the claims are respectfully requested.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further is desirable in order to place the application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact Applicants' undersigned attorney at the telephone number listed below.

Respectfully submitted,

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Please charge or credit our Account No. 03-0075 as necessary to effect entry and/or ensure consideration of this submission.